
The Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil?

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1. **Rite of Reception calls for CELEBRATION WITHIN MASS**, if possible; no specific day or season is mentioned. Makes no reference to the Easter Vigil (475.1). Specifically directs that “any appearance of triumphalism must be clearly avoided” (475.2)
 - The Rite of Reception was originally included in the RCIA *editio typica* as an **appendix**.
 - In the USA, it now appears as *part* of the RCIA, as Part II, chapter 5.
2. **USA 1988 edition of RCIA offers a COMBINED RITE of baptism and reception for the Easter Vigil**. Rome (Congregation for Divine Worship) at first denied permission to include this.
 - a. Ecumenical concerns. Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity: “The insertion of this rite into the Easter Vigil gives such importance to the event that it may cause surprise and even pain to our fellow Christians and give rise to new difficulties.”
 - b. Liturgical Concerns. CDW did not want to introduce new elements into the rite of baptism and confirmation. Also, they were concerned about preserving the distinction between catechumens and the baptized. Also, they noted that the Rite of Reception has its own liturgy: the Mass for Christian Unity may be used; the Nicene Creed is recited; the rite of admission immediately follows the homily. None of this is part of the Easter Vigil, and the Vigil’s own proper character would be compromised to do so.
 - c. The Rite of Reception directs that “often it will be preferable to celebrate the Mass with only a few relatives and friends” (475.2).

(Letter of CDW to NCCB, 1986, cited in Turner, *When Other Christians Become Catholic*, p. 80)
3. Since many American parishes were **already receiving baptized candidates for full communion at the Easter Vigil** (by mid 1980’s), the CDW approved the combined rite, with reception at the Easter Vigil, to show a proper way to do it, on the condition that it appear in an appendix (Turner, p. 81). It was better to offer the combined rite than to let parishes keep doing what they were doing.
4. **U.S. National Statutes on the Catechumenate** (Appendix III in 1988 RCIA) **prefer reception apart from the Easter Vigil, but permit it:**
 - 32 “The reception of candidates into the full communion of the Catholic Church should ordinarily take place at the Sunday Eucharist of the parish community, in such a way that it is understood that they are indeed Christian believers who have already shared in the sacramental life of the Church and are now welcomed into the Catholic Eucharistic community upon their profession of faith and confirmation....”
 - 33 “It is preferable that reception into full communion not take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism, possible misunderstanding of or even reflection upon the sacrament of baptism in another Church or ecclesial community, or any perceived triumphalism in the liturgical welcome into the Catholic Eucharistic community.”
 - 34 “Nevertheless if there are both catechumens to be baptized and baptized Christians to be received into full communion at the Vigil, ... the combined rite is to be followed.... A clear distinction should be maintained ... between candidates for sacramental initiation and candidates for reception into full communion....”
5. **Further confusion arises in the RCIA section about UNCATECHIZED CANDIDATES.**
 - *RCIA*, in Part II, chapter 4, “Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist,” calls for these adults to complete their initiation at the Easter Vigil.

“The high point of their entire formation will normally be the Easter Vigil. At that time they will make a profession of the faith in which they were baptized, receive the sacrament of confirmation, and take part in the Eucharist” (RCIA 409).

- This section in the *editio typica* was originally intended for uncatechized Catholics who would be completing their Christian initiation with confirmation and Eucharist. These are Catholics who were baptized as infants but received little or no further catechetical formation.
- However, in the 1988 USA edition, this section includes both Catholics and “members of another Christian community” (1988 n. 400, 1972 n. 295). Including uncatechized non-Catholic Christians in this section requires introducing the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church into the Easter Vigil, following n. 409 above (1972 n. 304) [“high point” is normally the Easter Vigil].
- The U.S. National Statutes recommend that baptized uncatechized Catholics not receive confirmation and Eucharist at the same time as candidates for baptism, i.e., at the Easter Vigil (NS 26).

6. *RCIA*, in Part II, chapter 4, “Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist,” calls for **liturgical celebrations** to make holy the period of preparation for the sacraments.

- It asks for a rite to welcome these adults to the community, celebrations of the word of God with catechumens, and allows some of the catechumenate rites to be used, such as the presentation of the Creed or Lord’s Prayer (1988 n. 405-407, 1972 n. 300-302). Penitential services during Lent prepare the uncatechized for the sacrament of penance (1988 n. 408, 1972 n. 303).
- The 1988 USA *RCIA* composed a ritual for welcoming uncatechized candidates and added other optional rites for them as well. (N.B. “rite of reception” in US 1988 n. 406 (1972 n. 301) refers to a rite of welcoming.)
- But instead of designing new rites, the optional rites for the uncatechized were closely modeled on the rites in *RCIA*, Part I. Although the wording is adapted to respect the candidates’ baptism, in practice the two sets of rites are very similar. The penitential services called for in n. 408, for instance, became a slightly modified scrutiny, which may be celebrated *at Mass* on the Second Sunday of Lent.
- The distinction between catechumens and baptized candidates is even more blurred when the two groups celebrate combined rites together.
- The optional rites for the uncatechized follow the liturgical year as do the rites for catechumens, leading up to the Easter Vigil. In addition, many parishes also use these rites for catechized candidates for full communion, which is completely without precedent in Christian history. The simple Rite of Reception has become obscured by the additional rites and incorporation into the Easter Vigil.

Paul Turner: “The adaptations inserted into Part II, section 4 of the 1988 English translation... have clouded the vision of the rite of reception in section 5. All well-intentioned and approved by the Vatican, the adaptations of the catechumenate rites for baptized candidates have managed to disaffirm the baptism received, especially when celebrated in the combined rites. ... The *editio typica* presented a series of prebaptismal and initiatory rites for catechumens and only one rite for the baptized candidate: the rite of reception.”

(*When Other Christians Become Catholic*, Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 151-152.)

“Well-intentioned efforts at including baptized candidates in the preparation and celebrations for catechumens have backfired. ... When Catholics bring candidates through a series of rites prior to their reception, they mean to enliven the worshiping faith of the community, but they succeed in polarizing the baptized from the baptized. By including the rite of reception into the framework of the Easter Vigil, Catholic parishes blur the distinction between the baptized and the unbaptized. They confuse the meaning of the very baptism they are trying to exalt. They verge on the triumphalism the church was trying to avoid.” (Ibid, p. 167)